

PREACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUCHARIST

A Patristic Perspective

Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B.

The earliest testimony we have of preaching at the Eucharist is from the Acts of the Apostles, and the account reports considerable excitement. "On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day, and he kept on speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were gathered, and a young man named Eutychus who was sitting on the window sill was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. Once overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and when he was picked up, he was dead." The rest is known. Paul brings him back to life, and then we read, "Then he returned upstairs, broke the bread, and ate; after a long conversation that lasted until daybreak, he departed" (Acts 20: 7-12). There are lessons about preaching in this—for example, going on and on can kill a man—but I cite it not for that reason but more as a primitive account of the same topic I am addressing in this study; namely, that the celebration of the community's Eucharist is both preceded and followed by talk. Here we will ask what kind of talk? What kind of preaching? Classic is the account of Justin Martyr at least a hundred years later, where he describes the practice of the community's Sunday Eucharist.

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1. The first answer to this is given, together with its context in Acts 2: 42: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."

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Describing the lives in cities or memoirs of the long as time per discourse instru Then he goes on again: Eucharist content of the p gives an exhortat and prophets. C accomplish: the ; tion of how we that are read wh In the liturgical r with a new lecti weekday euchar through all sorts bishops, priests, ; selves responsible This is certainly ; ture for the Cath Nonetheless, few of connection bet the Eucharist w more, concentrat loss of much pre time of any sort. I out to be exegeti raise all sorts of out theological t preaching is addi What can be done serve the gains o same time make c and the Eucharist times of the churc four basic areas. I *ditions* for preach *work* in which pre theological *conten* ing these I will be two ways of doing during the Euchar 2. Justin Martyr, Apolo

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A THEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUNDATIONS
OF PREACHING

Even though Christian preaching relied on rabbinical and hellenistic precedents, in its essence it was a new phenomenon in the ancient world. Its newness corresponds to the newness of the Christian message. In the same way that the Gospels are a new literary genre conformed to the need of professing faith by telling the story of Jesus, so Christian preaching became a new way of public speaking precisely because its message was altogether new: the incarnation of the Son of God, his death and his resurrection.³

Christian preaching derives from the Lord himself, more precisely, from his resurrection. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28: 19-20). Making disciples, teaching what comes from the Lord—this is the task of preaching. Theologically this is important. Preaching is not the initiative of the church but of the risen Lord, who said in this same context, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." In Mark's gospel we are told that this presence of the risen Lord confirms preaching: "They went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).

This commission to preach, which the apostles received from the Lord, parallels the Lord's own receiving of his mission from the Father: "The risen Lord says to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20: 21). This "as" and "so" express a huge mystery; indeed, nothing less than an echo of the trinitarian mystery in which the Son comes forth from the Father. In that same way, from those same mysterious depths, the apostolic preacher comes forth from the risen Lord. Thus, the pattern according to which the Lord preached must become the pattern of every Christian preacher. Jesus expressed that pattern precisely: "My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me" (John 7: 16).

Even so, there is a difference in kind between the preaching of Jesus and the preaching of the apostles. Jesus, though bearing testimony to the Father, also bears testimony to himself.⁴ The apostles for their part bear testimony not to themselves but to Jesus. He indeed becomes the "Gospel as Literary Genre," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, eds. R. Latourelle and R. Fischella (New York 1994), pp. 368-71. The newness of Christian preaching is something that emerges again and again in the exhaustive study of patristic preaching by A. Olibar, *La predicación cristiana antigua* (Barcelona: Herder, 1991). To my knowledge this is the best single work on patristic preaching.

3. For the theological significance of the newness of the Gospel genre, see R. Latourelle, "Gospel as Literary Genre," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, eds. R. Latourelle and R. Fischella (New York 1994), pp. 368-71. The newness of Christian preaching is something that emerges again and again in the exhaustive study of patristic preaching by A. Olibar, *La predicación cristiana antigua* (Barcelona: Herder, 1991). To my knowledge this is the best single work on patristic preaching.

4. Luke 4: 21; John 3: 11; 5: 31-47; 8: 14-18; 10: 25; 15: 26; 1 Tim 6: 13; 1 John 5: 7-8.

la esperienza liturgica della Chiesa."

di Ambrogio si fondino sulla convinzione di una profonda unita (pur attraverso modalità diverse) e quindi di una continuità tra la storia-di-salvezza proclamata nella Scrittura e simbolo (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1981). On p. 25, he says, "... che la predicazione e la teologia et l'événement du salut, et, en même temps, de garder la supériorité ontologique de celui-ci." The same emerges in Ambrose. See the fine study by G. Francesconi, *Storia e Edizioni liturgiche*, 1992, pp. 153-76. In his concluding remarks, Mazza says on p. 174, "Le but de cette méthode, dans sa totalité, est d'assurer un lien ontologique entre le rite de la fin du quatrième siècle," in Thacca, A.M. and Pistoria, A. eds. *La predicazione liturgica et les commentaires de la liturgie*. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Subsidia 65 (Rome: death. For more, see E. Mazza, "Les raisons et la méthode des catéchèses mysta-gogiques and unite. Basing himself on Rom 6: 5, he observes that Christ really died, but that in baptism we have a death "like his." Nonetheless, the salvation for us is as real as his See, for example, *Mystagogical Catechesis* III, 4-5, where he attempts both to distinguish Jerusalem sees the sacraments as an ontological imitation of the events of salvation. For example, in his mystagogical catechesis, Cyril of ous Fathers tried to confront. For example, some of the major issues in sacramental theology that vari-graph condenses. I believe, some of the major issues in sacramental theology that vari- liturgy, see *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1085. What I have said in this para-describing the presence of the historical Paschal Mystery in every celebration of the 7. For justification of the expression "an hour which does not pass away" as a way of and Fundamental Theology" in *Ecclesia Omnino* 13 (1996), pp. 407-37, here pp. 410-17.

articles at a little greater length than I am doing here. See J. Driscoll, "Liturgy and Funda-mental Theology" in *Ecclesia Omnino* 11 (1994), pp. 69-99, here pp. 72-75; "The Eucharist Messaggero Padova, 1995), pp. 35-44. I too have attempted to summarize Marsili in two summary of Marsili, see A. Grillio, *Teologia fondamentale e liturgia* (Padova: Edizioni pp. 455-73; "Liturgia" in *NDL*, pp. 725-42; "Teologia Liturgica" in *NDL*, pp. 1508-25. For a (1971), pp. 153-62; "Liturgia e Teologia. Proposta e teoretica," in *Rivista Liturgica* 58 (1972), 1974), pp. 33-156; "La Liturgia nella Strutturazione della teologia" in *Rivista Liturgica* 57 Momento storico della Salvezza," in *Ammanesi I, Momento nella storia della salvezza* (Rome: 6. What I have said so far in this section relies on S. Marsili's insights in "La Liturgia.

community's minds and hearts up toward them. The Scriptures must be capable of explaining them, proclaiming them, lifting the Preaching during the Eucharist must speak of these things. The preacher must be capable of explaining them, proclaiming them, lifting the

event of salvation history, an hour which does not pass away? cup put the celebrating community into participatory relation with the body of Christ, in the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10: 16). That is, the bread and ebration. The bread and cup are a "communion," as St. Paul says, in the And they proclaim that event as the very event of the community's cel-the one and only event of salvation: the Lord's death and resurrection. gifts of bread and wine proclaim in their own way at an even deeper level that is, the ritual actions and words performed around the community's nation. The scriptural words proclaimed in the liturgy become sacrament; echoes the pattern of the Word becoming flesh in the mystery of the incar- But that is not all, for in some mysterious sense the eucharistic liturgy resurrection— Lord's death and the words proclaim.

ultimately the hearing an event of salvation, nothing less than the same event which ultimately the Lord's death and resurrection— becomes in the very Word—the moment of listening to the Word—the Word which proclaims listening to the moment of ultimately all the events of Scripture are reducible to one event which

8. There is, of course, briefly, offering my own will offer further bibli 9. Francesconi's entire Eucharist, see E. Maz: *Development of Its Int* The Liturgical Press, : cussed in these pages. 10. The exegetical pro shaping and authorizi use of the word "alleg

What is significant things to come" (I the Hebrews was (in Greek, *typos*, "These things ha was in Paul's su *typos, figura*." definitively event: which express th Testament itself.

These relationships express them a te Testament itself. which express th definitively event: was in Paul's su "These things ha (in Greek, *typos*, the Hebrews was things to come" (I What is significant

be expounded in the texts must be death and resurrected we have c this too must be I The practice of b enabled such a cl this way without that logic is still under-employed. Typology as a bit relationship of pe history—the deat ments of that eve deepest sense of they are part of th a placing of the N hermeneutical reg It is from this dyn These relationships express them a te Testament itself.

13. For example, as A. Ol and of the Holy Spirit ga the liturgy as well. A. Ol 14. F. Van der Meer mak five, on the eucharistic pi enter his [Augustine's] r human nature, is, though himself in adoration at f ignore, the sacramental. Sh the Bishop (New York: Sh

Our doctrinal situat Fathers. Our eucha patristic age. So, it! of preaching the b bread and wine and the assembly that Nonetheless, once understood theologically, preaching these things is not as difficult as following the theological discussion as to why it works; for the sacraments or figures—biblical and liturgical—have their own power to work on the mind and heart. It is enough for the preacher to

put them into relie dence, to proclaim b or figure him. Then and the symbols ha ers' minds and hear

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From this general tr consideration of the all, it is worth noting connecting of types

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practiced. This is di in a speculative sch essay, but cannot I more doctrine.

Of course, sacramen ing that needs to be had heresy in mind

(again, 1 Cor 10: 16). We have thus a middle term between ourselves and the events of the Paschal Mystery. We have a sacrament between

ourselves and that. A sacrament is a sacrament of the Paschal Mystery. In preaching, explaining how events of the Old Testa-

ment are sacraments of Christ (or call them also figures, shadows, types) becomes the basis for explaining in preaching how bread and wine

and the assembly that communes in these are also sacraments of Christ.¹² The way I am putting this is perhaps complicated, or at least some-

what dense. But I am trying to offer here a theological understanding of preaching the Eucharist and not merely a how-to-preach workshop.

12. For further discussion of this, see E. Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist. The Origin of the Rite and the Development of Its Interpretation*, tr. M. O'Connell (Collegeville: 1999), p. 120. Mazza is speaking of the Latin tradition as represented in Tertullian. For the same as unfolding in the Alexandrian tradition, see B. Studer, "Die doppelte Exegese bei Origenes" in *Mysterium Cantatis, Studien zur Exegese und zur Trinitätslehre in der Alten Kirche* (Rome: 1999), pp. 37-66. For useful summaries of Tertullian and Cyprian on these questions, see J. D. Lawrence, "Priest as Type of Christ, The Leader of the Eucharist in Salvation History accord-

ing to Cyprian of Carthage (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), pp. 63-72, 75-86.

A theology is achieved in the biblical text as a whole when read with the eyes of Christian faith and in a typological key. From this whole biblical world there emerge also symbols and ritual actions which correspond to the same theological understanding. Every type—biblical or liturgical—points to Christ in his Paschal Mystery; and so every type—biblical or liturgical—precisely because it is a type, ontologically participates in the one event which encompasses them all.

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